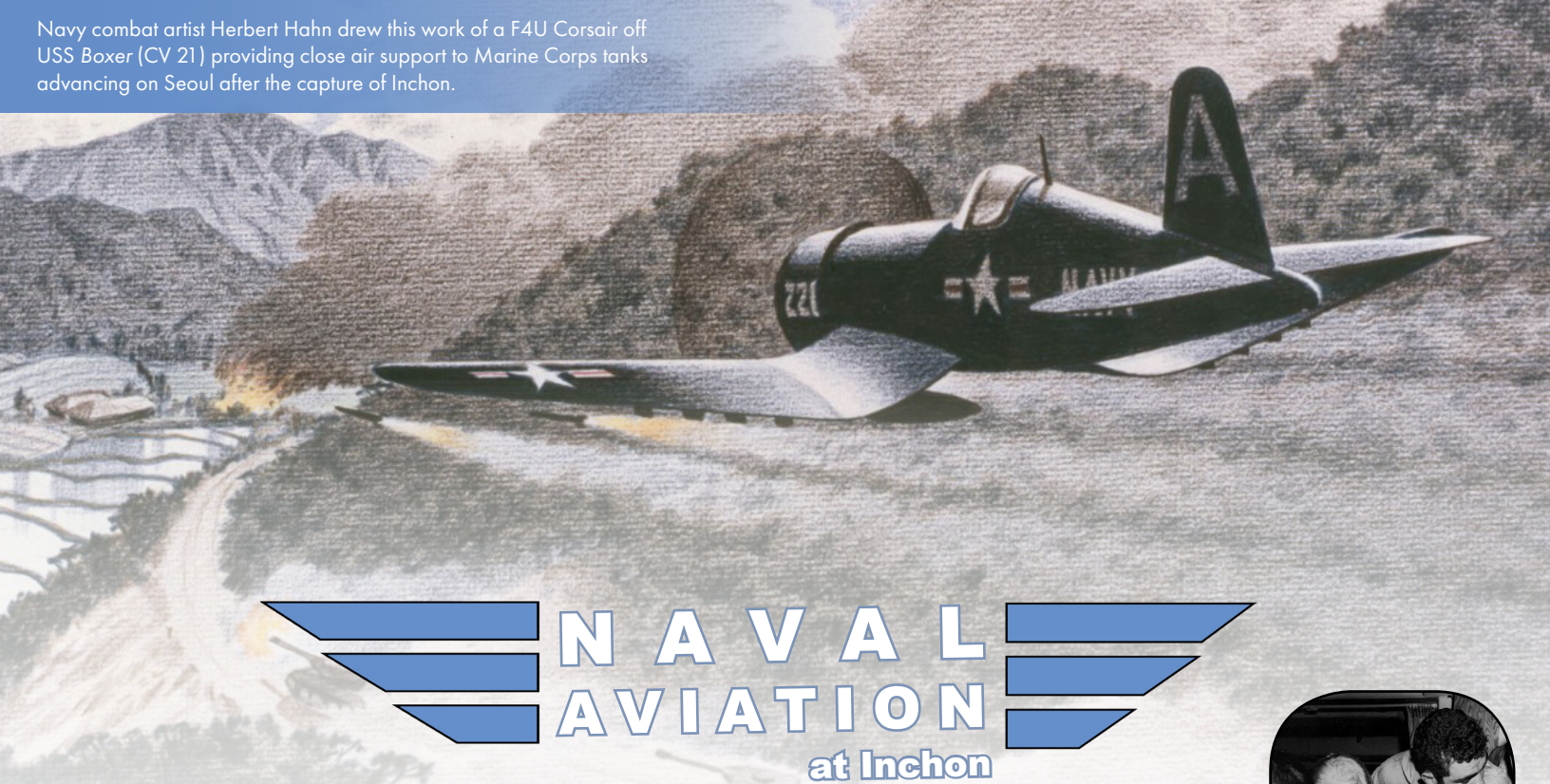


Navy combat artist Herbert Hahn drew this work of a F4U Corsair off USS Boxer (CV 21) providing close air support to Marine Corps tanks advancing on Seoul after the capture of Inchon.



When General of the Army Douglas MacArthur proposed a landing at Inchon, South Korea, skeptics abounded. One naval officer recalled, "We drew up a list of every natural and geographic handicap—Inchon had all of them." Ships of the invasion force would have to pass through a narrow channel and instead of broad landing beaches there were patches of sand with a seawall. Where the United Nations forces possessed a distinct advantage was in airpower. Carrier-based aircraft had an impact even before the landing craft went into the water. Interdiction strikes beyond the beachhead targeted roads leading to Inchon to hinder enemy reinforcements and knocked out any artillery positions within range of the landing's point of attack. On D-Day, 15 September 1950, air operations began at 0454 with attacks against Wolmi-Do Island.

As the landings progressed, orbiting fighters pounced on enemy defenses threatening the assault forces. One F4U Corsair pilot, noticing that something didn't look right about a lighthouse, flew low and noticed it had been turned into a fort with two artillery pieces remaining silent until landing craft came into range. A coordinated attack by aircraft and naval gunfire obliterated the threat. "With the Marines ashore Corsair fighter planes from carriers ripped in on strafing runs parallel to the beach and there was a showering sparkling effect from their ricochets (sic) through the grays and blacks of a smoke curtain," wrote a war correspondent riding a landing craft. "Called to hit a special target jet planes put on a circus. Trailing each other they peeled upward, over and down in a gigantic loop ... It was like a big ferris (sic) wheel in the sky. On the downward swing they released their rockets." The successful landings at Inchon represented the foothold on the road to recapturing the South Korean capital of Seoul. A snapshot of naval aviation's effectiveness comes from the action report of USS Valley Forge (CV 45), which during the period 6–21 September launched 546 sorties over Korea, destroying 47 gun emplacements, 344 military vehicles, 15 supply and ammunition dumps, 27 locomotives, 70 railroad cars and 11 bridges.

*Author: Hill Goodspeed at the National Naval Aviation Museum*

**(Top)** With plenty of coffee on hand, U.S. Navy Corsair pilots of squadron VF-114 aboard USS *Phillipine Sea* (CV 47) discuss their next Inchon targets. **(Middle)** Ensign Edward Jackson landed his F9F Panther blind, September 17, 1950. While flying a strike over Inchon, Jackson's Panther hit a cable strung between two poles. With blood streaming down Jackson's face, his wingman and *Phillipine Sea*'s landing signal officers were able to talk Jackson down to a safe landing. **(Bottom)** This is the flight jacket of Marine Corps aviator Robert Keller who served as commanding officer of VMF-214 in September 1950. Known as the "Black Sheep" squadron, the Corsairs of VMF-214 operated off the escort carrier USS *Sicily* (CVE 118) during the Inchon landings. Lt. General Keller's jacket is now in the collection of the National Museum of Naval Aviation.

